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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a program to make grants for the establishment of prison
libraries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. CLEAVER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish a program to make grants for the establishment
of prison libraries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Prison Libraries Act
5 of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.**

7 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment
8 of this Act, the Attorney General shall establish a program
9 to make grants to eligible applicants for the purpose of

1 providing library services to incarcerated individuals in
2 order to advance reintegration efforts, reduce recidivism,
3 and increase educational opportunities.

4 **SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.**

5 An eligible grantee under this Act is any State or ter-
6 ritory that submits an application that includes the fol-
7 lowing:

8 (1) A comprehensive plan for how the grant will
9 be used, including project objectives, program de-
10 sign, and evaluation process.

11 (2) Proof of the existence of a physical library
12 at a correctional facility or the intention of creating
13 one.

14 (3) Data on the demographics of the population
15 of the facility sufficient to demonstrate a compelling
16 need for funding, including educational level of pris-
17 on population, rates of recidivism, socioeconomic
18 breakdown of the prison population or any other rel-
19 evant data.

20 **SEC. 4. USE OF FUNDS.**

21 Grant amounts shall be used to provide library serv-
22 ices to incarcerated individuals as set forth in section 2,
23 and may include usage for any of the following:

24 (1) Education and job training.

1 (2) Acquisition of modern materials and equip-
2 ment that reflect the interests, identities, abilities,
3 and languages of the prison population.

4 (3) Expansion of the infrastructure of prison li-
5 braries to be less restrictive, safety permitted, and
6 more welcoming with design and decor.

7 (4) Hiring of qualified librarians and staff to
8 manage the libraries, their resources, and services
9 and serve as the social coordinator for organized ac-
10 tivities and events, and who hold the following quali-
11 fications:

12 (A) Have practical library management ex-
13 perience.

14 (B) Demonstrated ability to catalogue, ar-
15 chive, and maintain databases and E-resources.

16 (C) Demonstrated ability to organize week-
17 ly, bi-weekly, and monthly events and activities.

18 (5) Literary training.

19 (6) Digital literacy training.

20 (7) Career readiness programming.

21 (8) Civic engagement programs.

22 (9) Restorative justice programs.

23 (10) Resident led programs.

24 (11) Health and wellness activities.

1 (12) Cultural exchange and appreciation pro-
2 grams, events, and activities.

3 (13) Computer (including laptops) and internet
4 access.

5 (14) Book discussion programs.

6 (15) Language services, including free English
7 classes.

8 (16) Audiobooks and accessible reading mate-
9 rials for the visually impaired and print disabled.

10 (17) eBooks.

11 (18) Management of book donation programs.

12 (19) Audio and visual materials or multimedia.

13 (20) Artistic programing such as painting, cre-
14 ative writing, poetry slams, drama, or music.

15 (21) Financial literacy.

16 (22) Family literacy activities facilitated during
17 in-person visits.

18 (23) Resource fairs.

19 (24) Making reasonable efforts towards building
20 a working relationship with local public libraries, in-
21 cluding—

22 (A) adoption of a standardized guideline
23 for library management;

24 (B) sharing of resources and materials
25 through an interlibrary loan arrangement; and

1 (C) implementation of coordinated orga-
2 nized events and activities.

3 **SEC. 5. PROHIBITED USES.**

4 Grant amounts may not be used for the following:

5 (1) Purchasing food, clothes, shoes, or hygiene
6 supplies.

7 (2) Payment of employee salary and benefits
8 unassociated with prison libraries.

9 (3) Physical and mental care for incarcerated
10 individuals.

11 (4) incarcerated individual transportation.

12 (5) Staff training unrelated to the library serv-
13 ices.

14 (6) General administrative functions or oper-
15 ations of the prison.

16 (7) Facility maintenance aside from the librar-
17 ies.

18 (8) Other obligations imposed on the facility by
19 law, including establishment of maintenance of a law
20 library.

21 (9) Any other use unrelated to library services,
22 resources, and management.

23 **SEC. 6. PRIORITIZATION.**

24 The Attorney General shall, in making grants under
25 this Act, comply with the following:

1 (1) The Attorney General shall prioritize mak-
2 ing awards to grantees that are the following:

3 (A) Applicants that follow local and or na-
4 tional standards and guidelines for library man-
5 agement.

6 (B) Applicants that add or prioritize post-
7 secondary education curriculum to library pro-
8 gramming.

9 (C) Applicants with plans for tangible,
10 positive, and measurable impact for their prison
11 population, including—

12 (i) plans for increasing literacy rates;

13 (ii) plans for increased secondary and
14 post-secondary enrollment and graduation
15 rates;

16 (iii) plans for development of technical
17 and vocational skills;

18 (iv) plans for expanded access to em-
19 ployment opportunities post-release; and

20 (v) any other factors that the Attor-
21 ney General determines appropriate.

22 (D) Applicants with plans for numerous
23 initiatives to maximize benefits and services for
24 their prison population.

1 (2) The Attorney General shall ensure geo-
2 graphic diversity as between grantees with regard to
3 the States and territories and between urban and
4 rural areas.

5 (3) The Attorney General shall establish a re-
6 porting system to monitor progress, performance,
7 and expenditures of grantees.

8 **SEC. 7. TERM.**

9 A grant under this Act shall be for term of one year,
10 and may be renewed annually for a period of not more
11 than 6 years in total.

12 **SEC. 8. REPORTING.**

13 Grantees shall submit annual performance measures,
14 including library activity statistics and program outcomes,
15 and expenditure reports to systems established by the At-
16 torney General under section 6(4).

17 **SEC. 9. CONDITIONS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—A grantee may not charge a fee
19 to any incarcerated individual for the following:

20 (1) Access to physical books.

21 (2) Access to eBook and audiobooks.

22 (3) Access to computers (including laptops) and
23 the internet within the library.

24 (4) Access to educational and artistic materials
25 needed to facilitate learning, training, and or activi-

1 ties, including notebooks, pens, pencils, paints, and
2 similar supplies.

3 (5) Printing services.

4 (6) Any other library services or resources.

5 (b) AVAILABILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM-
6 MING.—A grantee shall make the library space available
7 to post-secondary organizations and personnel for edu-
8 cational programming.

9 **SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
11 this Act \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2024 through
12 2029.